

# FEMINIST RHETORIC BY ANOTHER NAME: EXAMINATION OF ITS QUIET AND UNACKNOWLEDGED PRESENCE ACROSS DISCIPLINES

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Feminist rhetorics, a subfield within composition and rhetoric, has maintained a quiet yet transformative presence within rhetoric across disciplines. Feminist rhetorics employ new, intersectional rhetorical strategies, such as strategic contemplation, rhetorical listening, and alternative epistemologies, that challenge the traditional and patriarchal forms and styles of rhetoric we are so frequently taught to reproduce. Unlike conventional rhetoric, feminist rhetoric is not widely known or taught, and as a result, its contributions go largely, if not entirely, unnoticed. However, as students of feminist rhetorics themselves, the authors were compelled to recognize and credit this subfield for the shifts it has sparked within rhetoric as a whole. This research assessed the presence of feminist rhetorics within a variety of academic disciplines through the experiences of seven undergraduate students. Researchers learned of each participant's experiences with rhetoric and culture within their fields through individual interviews, and interviewees' responses were then analyzed to determine which, if any, disciplines use feminist rhetorical strategies and whether these strategies were identified as such. The authors found that feminist rhetoric had a greater presence within the humanities compared to the social and natural sciences. However, out of all the students we interviewed, only one identified the use of feminist rhetoric and rhetorical methodologies by its name. The authors hope that this research encourages the wider and increased use of feminist rhetorical strategies within academic and professional spheres to expand our definition of acceptable rhetoric further.

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## INTRODUCTION

Feminist Rhetorics challenges traditional structures of writing and other forms of communication by bending the rigid rules of communication and persuasion to make rhetoric

more inclusive, accessible, and fluid. Despite identifying as feminists, our first exposure to feminist rhetorics was through a feminist rhetorics course at our undergraduate university. “Our” refers to the two authors of this piece —

Allison and Cassie. We are both recent graduates; Allison double majored in legal studies and anthropology/sociology, while Cassie double majored in legal studies and political science.

Before that course, we had never heard of feminist rhetorical methodologies and would have defined feminist rhetoric as speaking or writing about “feminist issues.” We were unaware of feminist rhetorics as a field of study within composition and rhetoric and did not know there were alternative approaches to rhetoric. We’d never questioned how the speaking, writing, or reading we did daily was a product of patriarchy or how our rhetorical approaches could be reworked to support historically oppressed voices traditionally excluded from rhetoric. Consequently, we were interested to see whether we were alone in our unawareness of feminist rhetorics, as we suspected our peers also did not know of its existence.

## ACKNOWLEDGING FEMINIST RHETORICIANS AND THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO FEMINIST RHETORICS

LISA EDE, CHERYL GLENN,  
AND ANDREA LUNSFORD

“Border Crossings: Intersections of Rhetoric and Feminism” by Lisa Ede, Cheryl Glenn, and Andrea Lunsford served as our primary touchstone for understanding feminist rhetorics. Their article, written in 1995, establishes many tenets of feminist rhetorics while explaining that the standard rhetorical canons we rely on have “remained uncontested” and

were created in a society where only the input of white men was valued (Ede et al. 408).

Feminist rhetoric challenges how we approach rhetorical canons (style and delivery, in particular), and in turn, allows us to redefine and contest the traditional definition of a “good” rhetor, who can be considered a rhetor, and what counts as credible evidence. There are a myriad of tenets within feminist rhetoric that rhetoricians can choose to include in their work, but they exist as *possibilities*, not *requirements*. A “good” rhetorician is “assumed to be masculine, unified, stable, autonomous, and capable of acting rationally on the world through language” (Ede et al. 412). However, a rhetor, from a feminist rhetorical perspective, does not need to be dominant, aggressive, or assertive, traits which are commonly associated with masculinity (Ede et al. 435). Instead, a rhetor can have a genuine conversation with another, can listen rather than dominate the conversation, take time to understand opposing perspectives, and invite the views of others without being labeled as “timid,” “weak,” or “unprofessional,” traits which are often considered “feminine” (Ede et al. 435). Undoing this archetype of a “good” rhetor welcomes those who have previously “stood outside of the rhetorical situation” because they did not fit the framework being forced upon them (Ede et al. 412).

Expanding the accessibility of rhetoric to those who “have been historically denied access” by representing the perspectives of the “disempowered and downtrodden” (Ede et al. 435) is a key principle of feminist rhetoric. Historically, those who have been excluded from

rhetoric include women, nonbinary or gender fluid individuals, people of color, indigenous communities, enslaved people, low-income or impoverished people, and more. Our conception of rhetoric has been created and dictated by the same few voices. Feminist rhetoric seeks to recover the voices that were lost and saturate rhetoric with diverse individuals, perspectives, and experiences.

To do this, feminist rhetoricians have worked to broaden what is considered “credible” or “acceptable” evidence to support an idea or argument. Conventional forms of rhetoric “devalue personal experience in favor of “objective” facts, “rational” logic, and “established authorities” (Ede et al. 423). Feminist rhetoric upends patriarchal standards of what counts as proof or evidence by valuing the “intuitive and paralogical...thinking of the body as valuable sources of knowing” in addition to traditional proof (Ede et al. 413). Personal experience and observations in day-to-day life are considered to hold innate value and contribute significantly to feminist rhetorical scholarship: “From a feminist vantage point...it is impossible to take the subjectivity of the rhetor for granted, impossible not to locate that subjectivity within the larger cultural and ideological forces” (Ede et al. 412–413).

### ALEXANDRA HIDALGO

In her video essay “Cámara retórica: A feminist filmmaking methodology for Rhetoric and Composition,” published in 2017, Alexandra Hidalgo introduces three feminist rhetorical methodologies that we identified throughout our research: strategic

contemplation, the ethics of interdependence, and practicing mentorship. While Hidalgo herself was a filmmaker, we believe her methodologies are transferable to written forms of rhetoric as well. Strategic contemplation requires the researcher to reflect on how they view their project and, most importantly, how the subjects are represented in that project, whether they be living or deceased (Hidalgo). Similarly, Hidalgo emphasizes that all rhetoricians must “represent others ethically” by accurately retelling their stories with context and respect. Hidalgo refers to this responsibility as the “ethics of interdependence;” she explains: “The ethics of interdependence is hard work... However, it is worth it. We cannot always share authorship with our participants, but we can make sure that they benefit from the final product by having control of how their stories are told.”

Rather than being viewed as subjects to be experimented on, observed, and then written about for the sake of impersonal analysis, feminist rhetoric encourages researchers and rhetors to view and speak about subjects with humanity and respect; after all, the research would not be possible without their contributions (Hidalgo). This can include giving subjects a more active role in the creative process, taking their input into account, and ensuring they accept the final product before publication (Hidalgo). Lastly, Hidalgo strengthens the relationship between the researcher and participants through practicing mentorship. Practicing mentorship involves sharing knowledge with all participants, no matter their role or status within a project or organization

(Hidalgo). It encourages people to “learn while working,” share ideas, and provide feedback freely in an inclusive and collaborative environment (Hidalgo).

#### KRISTA RATCLIFFE

In her essay “Rhetorical Listening: A Trope for Interpretive Invention and a “Code of Cross-Cultural Conduct” published in 1999, Krista Ratcliffe explains how, in the field of composition and rhetoric, “reading and writing reign as the dominant tropes for interpretive invention; speaking places as a respectable third; [and] listening runs a poor, poor fourth” (195). However, she illustrates how rhetorical listening can be used as a tool to facilitate cross-cultural communication when the listener focuses on understanding the other person’s stance.

Cross-cultural communication involves noting commonalities and differences, reflecting on the other person’s identities and lived experiences, and viewing the conversation as a mutually beneficial exchange of ideas rather than an argument or competition in which only one person can prevail (Ratcliffe 204).

#### STACEY WAITE

Stacey Waite’s “Cultivating the Scavenger: A Queerer Feminist Future for Composition and Rhetoric,” published in 2015, presented two feminist rhetorical methodologies that appeared in our research: alternative epistemologies and the scavenger methodology. Alternative epistemologies seek to change the way we think and conceptualize systems and ideas rather than offer a mere “counterclaim

to dominant knowledge” (Waite 56). They do so through intentional “interruption and/or disruption... in dominant ideologies to put a wrench in the wheel of conventional thought” that, effectively, would restructure or fully dismantle hierarchies (Waite 56). Put simply, alternative epistemologies focus on changing the process of thinking and expanding ways of knowing rather than taking conclusions, ideas, and knowledge to be self-evident (Waite 56). Waite’s take on the scavenger methodology is multifaceted. When we write, they propose we “move in and around” and look even for those things that don’t fit, or don’t seem to” (Waite 59). This methodology involves embracing contradictions that appear in our writing instead of achieving “purity” and “cohesion” by following the safe, linear pattern of thought to express one’s ideas (Waite 59, 63). Waite’s scavenger approach “disrupt[s] ways of knowing that seem dominant, taken for granted, or obvious,” which is an essential aspect of feminist rhetoric (51).

#### PROJECT PURPOSE AND INTERVIEW STRUCTURE

Our research aimed to explore the impact feminist rhetorics has had in various disciplines, and whether interviewees held biases, either positive or negative, toward the subfield. As such, we obtained HSRB approval to interview our peers about their perceptions of rhetoric and feminism within their disciplines and assess the presence of feminist rhetorical methodologies. We interviewed seven individuals, all of whom were, at the time, students at

Roger Williams University. We chose our interviewees intentionally to ensure representation across various academic fields. Though disciplinary was our primary concern in choosing interviewees, it happened that they were also of a variety of gender identities and sexualities

One limitation to the diversity of our interviewees is that a majority are white individuals. Though we asked nonwhite students to participate, most either declined or were unavailable at the time we conducted interviews.

Interviews were conducted individually so that each participant could answer without undue influence from other participants. We obtained informed consent from each participant at the start of their interview after explaining the interview process and purpose of the research. Our interviews consisted of ten primary questions (see appendix), and in some cases, interviewees were asked additional, tailored questions to guide their thought process. Generally, interview questions assessed conceptions regarding the labels “feminist” and “feminism,” opinions surrounding what constitutes a “good” rhetor in their field, and their prior knowledge of feminist rhetorics. Upon concluding the interview, we debriefed participants about the purpose of feminist rhetorics and highlighted examples from their interview responses. This fostered discussion with interviewees about how they already use feminist rhetorical methodologies or how they could adopt more in the future. Throughout this paper, interviewees are referred to, with permission, by their first names.

## **SIMULTANEOUSLY A STUDENT AND TEACHER OF RHETORIC: LUCAS**

Lucas double-majors in secondary education and English with a minor in psychology and uses he/him/his pronouns. As our first interviewee, we were pleasantly surprised by how knowledgeable he was about rhetoric, how it was used, and the many forms it appears in his field. We were struck by his discussion about his future career as an English teacher and how he would be teaching students about rhetoric, noting lesson planning and curriculum design as two examples of rhetoric in his discipline. Lucas emphasized maintaining engagement with students, ensuring that material is accessible to and mindful of the different identities and learners in the classroom while meeting the content standards put forth by the school, displaying strategic contemplation. Being a “good teacher,” in Lucas’ words, is not always attainable because a teacher’s best looks different every day. Lucas did a wonderful job shedding light on the expectations of “good teachers” that may not be as obvious to people outside of his discipline, and how these expectations oftentimes make him feel excluded because of who he is and the many identities that make him so. Lucas said:

I’ve wrestled a lot with being myself in the classroom...you have to dress a certain way...look a certain way, you have to talk a certain way... It’s making everything standardized, you know, not individual and unique, and I think that I am a very individualistic and unique person and I felt even in my first placement this

year where I am in the schools for the first time, I've actually seen that like, I can't paint my nails, I can't wear make-up, I can't like, wear clothes that I want to, I have to dress very like, what I guess society expects of a cis-gender man... So, I feel like, I would say that I kind of fit in in the traditional sense but also I don't because I have these parts of my identity that I have to hide and conceal in order to become like what people would consider to be a good teacher.

His comments further protest the idea of the traditional rhetor, illustrated by Ede et al. While this conception of a rhetor may be the case for the majority of disciplines and careers, in education, it is the opposite. Women are the predominant rhetors in Lucas' field, however, and he touched upon this feminine association with teaching. In particular, he discussed the common description of teachers as "nurturing" or "caring," which are often considered feminine traits, and how that "others" male teachers. To Lucas' point about being actively discouraged from being his authentic self in the classroom to fit a mold and become a "good" teacher, his values for individualism and positionality are inherently feminist. He advocates for the importance of fostering not only a diverse classroom community but also a diverse school community.

## **RHETORIC TO A WOMAN IN A MAN'S GAME: AUDREY**

Audrey double-majors in legal studies and political science, uses they/she pronouns, and

self-identifies as a feminist. From the outset of their interview, Audrey emphasized that there is a difference between "good" and "bad" rhetoric. This idea of classifying rhetoric as either good or bad reflects a deeper societal belief that rhetoric is inflexible; it depicts rhetoric as something that requires certain boxes to be checked to be considered "good." Frequently throughout her interview, Audrey shared that politics did not feel like a "safe space for women." Audrey stated they feel far-removed from the political sphere due to their gender, sexuality, and socioeconomic status. When asked to describe what constitutes a "good" rhetor in her area of study, Audrey described a "good" political scientist as "rich, strong, and confident" before commenting that most of the voices in the political sphere belong to men. As a political science major herself, Cassie understands all-too-well what Audrey means by this; I (Cassie) know very few women in politics, and those I do know all have horror stories about how difficult it was to be accepted in the field and how they feel they still aren't taken seriously. In describing an ideal rhetor in her field, Audrey asserted that the archetype of an assertive, brazen, loud man has been pushed onto her as something she should strive to be, at least metaphorically. Consequently, they expressed that they do not feel welcomed or accepted in political science because, as an LGBTQ+ woman from a middle-class background, it is impossible for them to ever fit into that role. Jess Crispin relayed a similar issue in her article "The Problem with Universal Feminism," where she detailed a conflict between feminists and women who feel they should conform to

patriarchy to be more palatable to men (8). Audrey's struggle is reflected in this issue. In feeling the need to act like a man or play into patriarchal stereotypes about a woman's role (or lack thereof) in politics, Audrey is experiencing the struggle that many other feminists have experienced. Political science could benefit from adopting feminist rhetorics to challenge this male-dominated field and make political voices more representative of the people they serve.

Audrey hopes to someday make a mark in the political sector to uplift the voices of those who have historically been marginalized and excluded from policymaking. In particular, she feels that women are undermined in the political process and hopes to change that in the future. A major tenet of feminist rhetorics is doing just that: expanding rhetoric to those whose voices have been excluded or erased (Ede et al. 435). As Ede et al. eloquently stated in their article, feminist rhetoric seeks to rectify "the almost impossible position of [being] a passionate woman" (424). Some of Audrey's frustrations of being a passionate woman who feels excluded from a patriarchal field could be addressed and reversed through wider acceptance of feminist rhetorical methodologies, particularly those which expand the idea of who constitutes a successful political rhetor.

### **MODERN FEMINIST RHETORICS TRANSPORTED TO THE PAST: RICHARD**

Richard majored in history with a minor in English and uses he/him pronouns. As the

only straight, white man we interviewed, we were surprised to see that Richard has unknowingly adopted some forms of feminist rhetoric in his field of study, despite being someone who would benefit the most from traditional patriarchal rhetoric. Richard practices "bottom-up history" where he attempts to retell history through the perspective of those who have been oppressed and thus excluded from the rhetorical stage. Richard emphasized the continuous struggle he faces as a white man attempting to relay the stories of enslaved black and Indigenous people, but also noted he makes a good-faith effort to directly communicate information he finds in first-hand accounts and seek input from individuals who share identities with the historical people he researches. This commitment to accurately portraying the lived experiences of marginalized historical subjects demonstrates Hidalgo's strategic contemplation.

A common theme in Richard's interview was the tension between the desire for open interpretation and the need to prove an argument. Richard explained that historians utilize a wide variety of sources in their research, such as diaries, letters, and even artwork, sometimes due to limited information being available over time. Though he may do this out of sheer necessity, alternative evidence is a feminist rhetorical strategy within Waite's scavenger methodology. By accepting information garnered from diaries, letters, or art, Richard expands the definition of legitimate evidence. A source as personal as a diary only includes one person's lived experiences through their own eyes; however, by recognizing the value in these

lived experiences and trusting the validity of the person's word at face value, Richard is engaging with feminist rhetorical methodologies.

Despite this, Richard also referenced the need to make and support an argument to be considered a "good" historian. Richard explained that leading historians expect to see research presented to them in a way which models a traditional Aristotelian approach to the rhetorical canon of argument: "you must state your case, and you must prove it" (Ede et al. 414). Therefore, although the field of history accepts alternative forms of evidence, it still forces people into a discursive "straitjacket" in which people are either "right or wrong" (Ede et al. 416). In doing so, the focus shifts from sharing ideas and new theories to "triumphing over an opponent" to prove your theory is the best theory (Ede et al. 416). Considering how uncertain history is, especially when uncovering the stories of excluded groups, much is left open to interpretation, which is not conducive to a patriarchal argument or proof-based approach.

Richard emphasized the pushback he receives when he uses the bottom-up approach. As Richard phrased it, "people get uncomfortable when they are told that what they've always been taught is not the full, or true, story." However, Richard believes recovering the voices of those who have been erased from the historical record through "documentary genocide" is a worthwhile struggle. The pushback from some of the historical community seems to stem from the use of feminist rhetorical methodologies in addition to the content itself; as Richard noted in one example, certain

historians will not accept a story spotlighting the suffering of an enslaved person if the only evidence is through personal letter correspondence. By disrupting patriarchal notions of what constitutes evidence, the organization and presentation of research or theories, and the inclusion of marginalized voices, feminism can make strides and be taken more seriously in mainstream rhetoric. Richard's use of these methodologies in history, both in terms of application and purpose, is nearly identical to the feminist rhetorical strategies described above, but is instead regarded as "bottom-up history." Though we do not know if the alternate labeling of the methodology is due to unawareness of feminist rhetorics or an intentional erasure of them, some historians have implemented these strategies into mainstream discourse within their field.

## REIMAGINING RHETORIC THROUGH SILENCE: XIOMARA

Xiomara majored in forensic science, minored in American Sign Language and uses she/her pronouns. Xiomara identifies as a feminist but emphasized that she does not feel included in the "dominant feminist" group. When asked to elaborate, Xiomara expressed that she feels feminism is dominated by white women and their white feminist ideology, which she does not feel included in as a woman of color herself. Xiomara made a point to differentiate between gender and race at multiple points during her interview, indicating she feels they exist in two separate continuums. Feminist rhetorics seek to bridge the gaps between iden-

tities such as race, gender, class, and sexuality, to name a few, by promoting intersectionality and recognizing that everyone's unique combination of identities plays a significant role in shaping their lived experiences and worldview (Ede et al. 404). In fact, as Hidalgo details, the ultimate goal of feminism is social justice, which, when done appropriately, requires intersectionality.

Xiomara is uniquely situated in her American Sign Language minor as a hearing person learning a language intended to promote inclusion of, and to be used by, the deaf community.

Throughout her interview, Xiomara made it clear that she recognizes her privilege as a hearing person and that she is a "guest" in learning and speaking American Sign Language (ASL) since the culture surrounding the language was not created for her or other hearing individuals. Xiomara noted that ASL is a distinct form of rhetoric since it is a language that does not involve speaking or writing, but rather solely consists of hand gestures, facial expressions, and other body language. In recognizing ASL as rhetoric, Xiomara is challenging what has traditionally been considered to qualify as rhetoric by expanding the discipline's inclusion of and accessibility to historically marginalized groups (Ede et al. 412).

Xiomara emphasized that as a hearing person, she makes an effort to ensure she is using the language accurately and caters the conversation to a deaf person's preferences (if she is communicating with a deaf person). For instance, she asks them if they would rather communicate by signing or writing, accepts suggestions from them regarding her signing, and

learns as much as she can about deaf culture to truly respect and appreciate the language. In doing so, Xiomara practices both strategic contemplation and rhetorical listening, two methodologies in which the rhetor places value on the people with whom they are conversing and carefully considers their ideas to fully understand the other person's perspective. Xiomara institutes strategic contemplation in asking the preferences of a deaf person with whom she is having a conversation, as well as taking their feedback into account to learn more about signing and appreciate deaf culture. As does Lucas with his students and Richard with the historical figures he studies, Xiomara takes the needs and desires of those she interacts with into account when holding a conversation or relaying the conversation to others. Xiomara makes an active effort to recognize how she, as the rhetor, is impacting her listener and vice versa. When she makes a conscientious effort to fully understand, respect, and remember the input of deaf people in future signing conversations, Xiomara engages in rhetorical listening.

Xiomara holds the personal definition of feminism as equality between genders and getting women into positions of power typically held by men, which struck us as noteworthy. Xiomara's definition of feminism, particularly the aspect of putting women into positions of power, is framed within the existing patriarchy and its power hierarchies. Feminism and feminist rhetorics contest these existing systems by offering alternative epistemologies, which seek to change and disrupt the way we think and conceptualize these systems. Xiomara shared an example of this disruption of conventional

practice occurring in forensic science. In this field, it is acceptable and encouraged to admit when you don't know something and collaborate with people from different areas of expertise or entirely different fields to find a solution rather than forge ahead on your own (Xiomara). This upends the universal practice of trying to solve a problem or complete a task individually by admitting ignorance and creating an open dialogue with others. By including individuals from other disciplines in her work and academic inquiry, Xiomara “refuses the academic compulsion toward disciplinary coherence,” which traditional patriarchal forms of rhetoric enforce (Waite 59). This type of collaboration not only promotes cross-cultural and interdisciplinary communication, but also rhetorical listening and echoes a scavenger methodology.

## THE WILLFUL SURRENDER OF PATRIARCHY TO FEMINISM: RYLEIGH

Ryleigh double-majors in legal studies and philosophy with a minor in political science, is a trans woman, and uses she/her/hers pronouns. Ryleigh's trans identity has led her to have a unique relationship with patriarchy and feminism. Ryleigh, unlike many female-identifying people, has experienced both sides of the patriarchy:

I grew up from the position that this [patriarchy] was something I've been bestowed upon. Like, this is something you can have, and you can take advantage of this, and use it however you want. And,

here I am in my own identity saying 'I don't want to use that and I don't want to benefit from the patriarchy in that sort of way.'... and that's really interesting because I had that opportunity to take it.

She now shares experiences many female-presenting people encounter daily, such as sexism, harassment, and overall concern for their safety in various situations. Yet, when we asked her if she was a feminist, she responded: “I consider myself generally to be a feminist...” Out of context, this statement might trigger some thoughts about the negative connotations of the feminist label and the feminist movement more broadly, and rightfully so; however, Ryleigh offered a different reasoning that I (Allison) was not aware of previously: the impact of a sub-sect of feminism known as Trans-Exclusive Radical Feminism (TERFS). Ryleigh is not against feminism, but as a trans woman, Ryleigh is not always recognized, accepted, or included in the feminist movement by other self-proclaimed “feminists.” Ryleigh expressed that there is a “divide” in her understanding of feminism because of its exclusive sub-sects, and that she cannot fully and comfortably identify as a feminist because those sects are “blind to intersectional interpretations of feminism.” In her book “Living a Feminist Life,” Sara Ahmed addressed these blind and exclusionary interpretations of feminism, advocating that: “No feminism worthy of its name would use the sexist idea ‘women born women’ to create the edges of feminist community to render trans women into ‘not women,’ or ‘not born women,’ or into men. No one is born

a woman; it is an assignment...that can shape us; make us; and break us” (15). Modern feminism has worked to undo the harsh boundaries dictating who can and cannot be a feminist, advance feminist ideals, and exhibit feminist values. Here, Ahmed reminds us that feminism was born out of a need to remedy and abolish systemic and social inequalities, and to undermine or ignore that impetus is inherently anti-feminist.

Ryleigh was the only interviewee to identify areas in her discipline where she sees feminist methodologies in practice by name. She discussed the dichotomy between her experiences as a legal studies student and a philosophy student saying that in philosophy she has had “quite the opposite experience...philosophy is great for critical thinking which, I think, allows for a lot more feminist rhetoric to flourish because it’s very based on intersections of identities, and for people to understand all those identities and how they encompass each other.” She explained that her philosophy classes are more conversational and encourage multiple perspectives, while her legal studies classes do not offer that space. Notably, Ryleigh also refers to two feminist methodologies indirectly: intersectionality and rhetorical listening.

In Ryleigh’s case, rhetorical listening occurs in the courtroom and the classroom. Rhetorical listening is a very accessible rhetorical strategy that promotes other feminist methodologies in the process. For instance, Ryleigh discussed the feminist values of intersectionality and a conversational style of rhetoric; this conversational style of rhetoric is a form of rhetorical listening because it promotes discourse

between individuals of different identities through the identification of shared and individual experiences (Ratcliffe 204). Ryleigh also stated the importance of learning what her predecessors thought and assessing their opinions, whether in philosophy or legal studies. This value reflects Ahmed’s citation-as-memory: “Citation is feminist memory. Citation is how we acknowledge our debt to those who came before; those who helped us find our way when the way was obscured because we deviated from the paths we were told to follow” (15-16). Ryleigh values and practices feminist methodologies regularly, she just has yet to be taught how to identify them by name.

## THE DEVIL’S ADVOCATE . . . AND A FEMINIST: OLIVIA

Olivia is pursuing a dual degree in criminal justice and psychology, a minor in legal studies, and uses she/her/hers. When we asked Olivia what forms of rhetoric she engages with in her classes, she mentioned it was predominantly listening. This was not the case for our other interviewees. Olivia discussed how it is important to fully understand the perspectives of others in the classroom before offering her own experiences and occasionally taking the position of the “Devil’s Advocate.” Integrating personal experiences and acknowledging your positionality within different academic spheres is a feminist rhetorical strategy. Subjectivity brings attention to intersectional identities and experiences that oftentimes challenge the dominant understanding and analysis of the topic at hand (Ede et al. 412). Sometimes, this

inclusion of subjectivity is the position of the “Devil’s Advocate” because rhetors in these situations do not always account for the multiplicity of identities and circumstances. This is another strength of rhetorical listening because once you understand the other individual or group’s perspective, you can bring attention to their oversights and “facilitate cross-cultural dialogues about any topic” (Ratcliffe 196).

When we asked Olivia to define her understanding of feminism, she explained: “My personal understanding is that there’s like a fight for equality for both female and male... I have had some experiences where, or like at least beforehand, I thought feminism meant like women above men.” To us, this reflected the anti-feminist and anti-feminism rhetoric sparked as a result of discomfort with, and misunderstanding of, the feminist movement. Olivia’s misconception of feminism is a result of feminism’s storied and contested history, which has, as Ahmed describes, subsequently attached itself to the label “feminist”: “so much history in a word; so much it too has picked up” (1). And, in direct contradiction to Ahmed’s citation-as-memory that Ryleigh alluded to, this anti-feminist discourse is perpetuated by a lack of consensus as to what feminism aims to achieve: “Today’s feminists accuse the actual feminists of ruining the movement’s good name and putting other women off from joining the cause” (Crispin 6). People claim that feminism is radical and inaccessible and that, as a result, women are afraid to adopt and brandish the feminist label (Baumgardner and Richards 56). But, then what weight does the feminist movement carry if we aren’t

uncomfortable? What are we fighting for in this modern wave of feminism? As a criminal justice student, Olivia is often exposed to toxic masculinity and what she referred to as “the brotherhood,” where female cops are mistreated daily because of their sex and gender identity. These are the instances and experiences that should spark the feminist movement and feminist ideology. Change isn’t easy; “identifying ourselves as feminists means addressing uncomfortable topics: the humiliation of being discriminated against...or sadness of discovering that the sons in our families are treated altogether differently from the daughters” (Baumgardner and Richards 56–57). Identifying as a feminist can oftentimes be uncomfortable; however, it is through the work of feminists that feminism earns its recognition. When feminist rhetorics and feminist methodologies that are already employed in disciplines aside from writing studies and composition are finally recognized by name as I (Allison) just referred to them, then maybe the negative connotation associated with feminism and the “feminist” label will begin to be dismantled.

## TALKING THE TALK: RAPHY

Raphy holds a dual degree in finance and Spanish and uses he/him/his pronouns. In his interview, Raphy discussed the forms of rhetoric he encounters and uses most often in his fields of finance and Spanish. Interestingly, but not surprisingly, he believes finance and Spanish share speaking as the dominant form of rhetoric and communication. Raphy explained that a “good” and effective rhetor in finance considers their audience by paying close atten-

tion to “how you say things,” being personable, and using soft skills. However, Raphy also expressed the importance of taking initiative in conversation, asserting that a skilled rhetor is reflected in a person’s ability “to be the first to start a conversation, being able to end a conversation... being able to not just dominate but lead conversations.” Speaking is viewed as the superior, persuasive, and more masculine form of rhetoric (Ratcliffe 220-221), and as such, it exemplifies the antithesis of rhetorical listening. This dominance that Raphy describes reproduces the purpose of rhetoric as argumentation and solidifies the object of such argumentation to be “winning” rather than creating a cross-cultural dialogue as Ratcliffe advocates for (221). The overreliance on speaking in an outwardly male-dominated discipline that Raphy, an insider, also identifies as “misogynistic,” makes sense. However, when we asked Raphy if he felt included in the definition of a “good” rhetor, he described, he was hesitant:

This is definitely an interesting question, cause I feel like I do have a lot of these skills...especially when I truly desire to converse with people, but being a queer Hispanic man in a cis-white man field makes it a lot harder for my voice and a lot of other voices to be heard... women and people of color [are] highly overlooked in a lot of fields, and finance is no different.

Here it is clear that, unlike Olivia’s experience in criminal justice, feminist rhetorical strategies of intersectionality and positionality are not present within finance. Rather than

being able to use these methodologies to challenge financial discourse by accentuating voices and experiences that have historically been cast aside (Ede et al. 412), Raphy’s experience in finance seems to command that rhetors conform. It requires that rhetors conceal and mask their identities to preserve its objectivity and replicate the ideals of the discipline. However, Sara Ahmed argues that a person’s intersectionality cannot simply be turned on and off; using her own identities as an example, she writes: “I am not a lesbian one moment and a person of color the next and a feminist at another. I am all of these at every moment” (230). Conversely, Raphy recognized a greater effort in his Spanish studies to include voices of women and other marginalized identities despite the prevailing toxic masculinity within Spanish-speaking cultures. Raphy also expressed his motivation to combine Spanish and business in assignments for his Spanish classes whenever he has the chance. Thankfully, by combining finance and Spanish in his undergraduate studies, he experiences both sides of the spectrum. This duality allows him to acknowledge and appreciate the positive contributions that result from including multiple voices, particularly the voices of those who have been erased. Another feminist rhetorical methodology that I (Allison) identified as integral to finance was Hidalgo’s practicing mentorship, where knowledge is shared with all participants, no matter their position within a project or organization. This inclusive and collaborative environment always results in involved individuals leaving with “invaluable knowledge” (Hidalgo). Raphy echoed this sentiment, conveying

that much of his experience with finance was gained through his internship rather than in his undergraduate classes. Especially, because in the world of finance, networking and “who you know” can oftentimes lead to new connections and create new opportunities for experiential learning (Raphy).

## CONCLUSION

Our interviewees provided insight into the rhetorical methodologies of disciplines spanning sciences, business, humanities, justice studies, and education, which we would not have otherwise known. We noticed a few patterns in the course of our interviews and subsequent analysis, regarding both the personal identities of interviewees and their areas of study. Disciplines that engage in more open dialogue and foster an environment of learning appear to be more compatible with feminist rhetorical methodologies than disciplines that prioritize a hierarchy of authority and focus on correcting “wrongs.” For instance, interviewees majoring in philosophy, history, education, and languages reported feeling more accepted within their field and reported the presence of more feminist methodologies, even if they did not know the methodologies were feminist ones. Conversely, interviewees majoring in legal studies, criminal justice, political science, and finance reported feeling unwelcome in their field and expressed a desire to incorporate more inclusive methodologies.

Though traditional, exclusive, and sometimes inaccessible rhetoric still seemed to be predominant in all the fields our interviewees

described, it was refreshing to discover that more inclusive, cooperative, and accessible forms of rhetoric are also becoming increasingly valued in a number of areas. Through conducting these interviews, we learned feminist rhetorical methodologies already exist in a variety of academic disciplines just under the guise of other names. Their presence in some fields shows there is already work underway to undo oppressive, patriarchal structures across disciplines. However, it is notable that these methodologies are not referred to as “feminist” in any of the fields our interviewees discussed. Though it may seem like a minor oversight, names have power, and removing the feminist label excludes the contributions and efforts of feminists who have introduced and promoted these ideologies and methodologies for decades. If these methodologies were referred to as feminist rhetorical methodologies in practice, regardless of discipline, it would connect individuals who benefit from and take an interest in feminist rhetorics to the larger feminist movement, thus furthering exposure to inclusion, equality, and all other goals of feminism.

It was important to both authors not only to extend feminist rhetorical methodologies to our participants but also to employ these strategies while researching and writing this piece. We would be remiss if we did not use these methodologies to challenge traditional, heteropatriarchal rhetoric and writing using our own “unconventional” writing techniques, intertwined voices, and emphasis on participants’ voices and identities. Throughout our interviews, we used Ratcliffe’s rhetorical listening methodology and responsibility logic by

providing an open forum for the interviewee to answer each question to their satisfaction (208). Rhetorical listening enhanced our ability to analyze participants' responses in the context of their identities, thus including multiple voices in this project aside from our own. Our essay structure itself takes inspiration from that of Waite's braided essay, "Cultivating the Scavenger," to bring both authors' voices together and give importance to our thoughts, experiences, shared ownership, and identities rather than treating the authors as though they are unimportant (54-55). In contrast to a traditional academic essay, we write in the first person throughout. We found it important to implement this feminist rhetorical strategy into the written portion of our research to intertwine the experiences of ourselves alongside our interviewees and create a dialogue that contests "acceptable" academic writing. Rather than structure our research like that of a typical scientific paper, we chose to feature one interviewee in each section to highlight the importance of their identities, contributions, and bring greater dialogue and humanity to our work. We aimed to include participants' feedback by sharing our finished piece with them and asking them to share suggestions. This idea was modeled after one of Hidalgo's ethics of interdependence. This is extremely important to the structure of our research because we were reliant on the interviewees' participation and contributions, we value their perspectives implicitly, and we want to ensure that their experiences and words are being respectfully and accurately represented.

Hearing the perspectives of students with different identities and areas of study opened our eyes to entirely different possibilities for the future potential of feminist rhetorics; we've thought about how it applies to our fields, but we'd never considered how feminist rhetorical methodologies may take on alternative forms in other majors. Both of us individually value feminist rhetorics and see what can be gained from utilizing them, but we also recognize the structural limitations that prevent us from freely and consistently using these methodologies. The current heteropatriarchal systems are hard to break down; challenging current norms is met with resistance. We therefore cannot always use these methodologies as we would like, not only for the risks they may present to us professionally and individually, but also because those with whom we live, learn, and work may be adversely impacted by our rhetorical choices. However, we remain committed to making a conscious effort to implement these methodologies in our work, where we can. Upon finding that feminist rhetorical strategies are already being used in some disciplines without their feminist label, we were also inspired to hypothesize how the expansion of feminist rhetorics can continue to improve inclusivity in the interviewees' fields in the future. We hope that by introducing our interviewees to the field of feminist rhetorics and highlighting the quiet and unacknowledged presence of feminist rhetorical methodologies within their disciplines, we are contributing toward a larger awareness and recognition of feminist rhetorics.

Beyond simply garnering recognition and awareness, this research also evaluates the effectiveness of feminist rhetorical methodology in its goal of expanding inclusion and recognizing the rhetorical contributions of historically marginalized individuals. Throughout our analysis, we consistently identified methodologies that would resolve interviewees' feelings of exclusion from the rhetorical stage in their field, increase diversity of thought and experience in discipline-specific conversation,

and promote collaborative and intersectional contributions to the field. With this in mind, it is our finding that the expansion of feminist rhetorical methodologies is beneficial to all disciplines and should continue to be implemented within all professional and academic fields. We hope that this research encourages the active and intentional use of these strategies in expanding "acceptable" knowledge and communication both within academic and professional spheres.

## APPENDIX

### INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Can you introduce yourself? What is your class year, major, pronouns, etc?
2. How do you define rhetoric? What are some examples that come to mind?
3. What forms of rhetoric are used most often in your field? (Speaking, writing, reading, or listening)
4. What constitutes a "good" [insert member of their field i.e. psychologist/historian/etc]?
5. Do you feel included or excluded from this definition?
6. What is your understanding of feminism?
7. Do you think there are any benefits to feminism? If so, explain.
8. Have you seen how feminism impacts your field?
9. Do you consider yourself a feminist?
10. Have you heard of feminist rhetorics before?

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